

**Robert Butler to Andrew Jackson, September 22, 1814,  
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by  
John Spencer Bassett.**

**COLONEL ROBERT BUTLER TO JACKSON.**

Fayetteville [Tenn.], September 22, 1814.

*Dear General,* I send Lieut. E. B. Billings with this communication, the dissolving of the court martial released him from arrest. A Letter from Colo. Pipkin informs that the major part of his regiment were in a state of flagrant mutiny, and were determined to march home on the 20th instant: but for this I would have set out early tomorrow morning, although I have been much indisposed for some days, and still continue so. I have delayed Capt. Camp and shall take him with me for reasons I will give you on sight.

\$25,000 has been procured and the like sum will be furnished pr. advice of the governor, and I have written to Genl Coffee to receipt for it and bring it on to head Quarters. The Horse will rendezvous at this place on the 28th and I have no doubt of the number being present. They will ma[r]ch as immediate there after as possible. I shall have one regiment of the militia organized and marched tomorrow and shall give positive orders to have those mutineers taken back to fort Jackson and the officers which may be with them put in irons. The odd Battalions I shall order to garrison the different posts sending the Maj. Comng. to fort Jackson with about two full companies, and shall order all of Colo. Pipkins Regiment on to Fort Jackson, where I hope you will meet them with orders to march below. The rascals should be taught what it is to disgrace the state and the american character. You can manage them when there to perfection and I know they are better disciplined than these are. . . . ,1

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1 The following documents illustrate this incident, which became famous as involving “the Execution of the Six Militiamen”. On Sept. 20 Maj. Jasper Smith reported the occurrences at Fort Williams to Col. Philip Pipkin, his superior, as follows:

“With regret I have to inform you that twenty six of the troops at this post dareingly shouldered their napsacks and formed in a line and marched for home this morning about sunrise left with us forty fit for duty Officers included sick one hundred and thirteen and three men dead and refused to stay to assist Buring them. Colo, I fear from every information that the troops at Fort Jackson has or will leave you in a short time. I have just recd, information that it is expected nearly all has left Fort Strother. the men contends that there is no such a law as to compell them to serve a longer time in one tour of duty than three Months previous to their discharge. I issued an order that no officer or soldier was to leave or desert the service of the united states that was stationed at this post; also I Read different sections of the law to them relative to the punishment that would be inflicted on them provided they left the service before discharged, their intentions were kept much concealed within them selves untill last evening at which time they become quite public in it and I fear that the leargest half of what remain here will act in the same way as soon as they git able to travel but at present our situation as respects the sick looks Distressing and I fear will be worse for the flour we git is all soilt and of couse be unholosom. I have just Recd, a letter from Majr. Cassleman at Fort Strother that states he is very sick and but little hopes of ever recovering. I should be quite glad to see you to know what steps are to be taken with those deserters. I am yours etc.”

“ *Sept the 21st.* Then left this place nine in addition to what went yesterday and I do believe every man that is able will be off in a short time they are very much sceared at this place in consequence of the deaths that appears to be taking place we have lost one more dead and one a dieing and several others past all hope so I fear in a few days there will be none left Able to Bury the dead as it is nearly the case now we have in this case to order out men on fatigue that is not able. I am Info[r]med the public stores is ordered back [to]

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this place which I think will not be safe. I hope you will be up to see us as soon as possible if not to write I am your sincear wellwishing friend, etc.”

One of the six prisoners executed was David Hunt, about whom the following “charges” exist in a paper in the Jackson MSS.:

“Fort Jackson, *September 2*, 1814. Charges Exhibitted Against David Hunt a private in Capt. George Mabourns company. Charge Ist. Mutany Specification in this. That on this day there was an Advertisement found on the fort gate post with the following words Viz.

Look Below we are the Boys. That Fear no Noise, Nor Orders that we hear, Eighteen days more, And then we go, And you cant find us here, For home we go, Or Be found in gore, And never come here no more, To Suffer as we and many others have Before Liberty Street.

And that Lieut. Rodney Earhart and Wm. Owen,s was Standing in the gate Talking about the said Advertisement, and Said Hunt came up to them and said he could tell them what he intended to do. And the Lieut. ask'd him what it was he intended doing. and he Replied he would go home at the end of three Months or he wou'd loose his life in the attempt. In treating his Officer with disrespect. Charge the second Specification in this. in making use of contemptuous Language to his Officer in telling him he shou'd go with him to the Colo,l and after the said Lieutenant Ordered him under guard he the said Hunt Ordered the Lieutenant to go and bring him some water”

Jan. 16, 1828, a resolution was introduced into the House of Representatives calling for a copy of the proceedings of the court martial which condemned the six militiamen on Dec. 5, 1814. When received, the documents were referred to the committee on military affairs, with instructions to report on them. The committee replied by giving a full and unreserved indorsement of the action of the court martial and of Jackson in respect to this affair. Its

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report, with the documents submitted by the War Department, is in *Am. St. Papers, Milit. Aff.*, III. 693–793, and in *Niles' Register*, XXXIV. 55–75.